

News Business Opinion Sports Arts Life Driving Healthing The GrowthOp Podcasts Newsletters
ePaper Refer a Friend



Local News

SHA juggles keeping COVID-19 out of long-term care and letting families come closer

The Saskatchewan Health Authority will allow "outdoor visitations" under specific circumstances.

Zak Vescera

Jun 03, 2020 • June 3, 2020 • 3 minute read • [Join the conversation](#)





Jack and Bev Shiffman celebrate their 68th wedding anniversary while seated six feet apart at Sherbrooke Community Centre.
PHOTO BY MATT SMITH /Saskatoon StarPhoenix

It's been months since Andy Kotelmach has seen his wife of 37 years in person.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

[SIGN UP](#)

Investor, Work and Finance Financial Post:
Introducing 5 Newsletters [Sign Up Now>](#)

[Manage Your
Subscription](#)

Sections  Search

SASKATOON STAR PHOENIX  Share

[Subscribe](#)[Sign In](#)

In mid-March, he was suddenly separated from her when the Saskatchewan Health Authority restricted visits to long-term care homes to limit the spread of COVID-19.

“I have been isolated from my only family member that I lived with. I’ve been denied access to her on the premise that I’m going to give her something,” Kotelmach said.

His plight illustrates the challenge Saskatchewan faces as it loosens rules on visitations to long-term care with the goal of keeping the virus out while allowing family caregivers a little bit closer.

On Wednesday the SHA announced it will allow homes to arrange “outdoor visitations” when “the resident’s quality of life and/or care needs cannot be met without the assistance of a designated family member or support.”

Visitors will still have to undergo screening and are asked to wear a medical-grade mask whenever keeping six feet of distance isn’t possible.

Previously, only visits for “compassionate reasons” were allowed, but SHA CEO Scott Livingstone said the authority recognized the need for visits, especially for people like Kotelmach who care for a partner with dementia.



SHA CEO Scott Livingstone PHOTO BY BRANDON HARDER /Regina Leader-Post

Livingstone emphasized the SHA usually encourages visits and that these policies “are not our norm but are designed to meet the demand of an unprecedented situation.”

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Outbreaks in long-term care homes in other provinces have claimed thousands of lives.

Shan Landry, a former social and health worker, is now involved in a coalition of family members, patients and other caregivers in Saskatoon. She said while Saskatchewan has generally succeeded at keeping COVID-19 out of nursing homes, that's come at a cost for residents' autonomy and mental health.

"While keeping people infection-free is incredibly important, we have removed one of the most important things about quality of life, which is human touch and connection with people they love," she said.

In some instances, people in long-term care may only have a few months left to live, she noted. Data from CIHI indicates that 65 per cent of discharges from long-term care homes in Saskatchewan in the 2018-19 fiscal year occurred because the resident had died in the facility.

Some long-term care homes have already allowed outdoor visitations. On Monday, 90-year-old Dr. Jack Shiffman celebrated his 68th wedding anniversary with his wife, Bev, from the other side of a chainlink fence.

Bev is a resident at Sherbrooke Community Centre, where Jack was a daily visitor prior to the pandemic. He said the separation has been "tough" but he believes outdoor visits at least let him make the best of the situation.

Kotelmach said he will "take what he can get," but he believes he should be allowed to visit his wife as long as he follows infection control measures and takes a COVID-19 test. He lives alone, so he's potentially even less of an infection risk than the staff. He's been frustrated by the health authority's strict rules when he knows his time with his wife is limited, he said.

"As bad as the pandemic days are, those are going to be my wife's best days. And they're just ticking off."

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Complete coverage: Covid-19 pandemic

zvescera@postmedia.com

twitter.com/zakvescera



NATIONAL STORIES

Saskatoon StarPhoenix Afternoon Headlines

Sign up to receive daily headline news from the Saskatoon StarPhoenix, a division of Postmedia Network Inc.

Email Address

Sign Up

By clicking on the sign up button you consent to receive the above newsletter from Postmedia Network Inc. You may unsubscribe any time by clicking on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of our emails. Postmedia Network Inc. | 365 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3L4 | 416-383-2300

TRENDING

- 1 Lawsuit filed against Saskatoon woman who alleged inappropriate conduct during 2016 video shoot**
- 2 Saskatoon manufacturers grapple with supply chain woes**

- 3 Two drown in northern Sask.'s Turtle Lake over the weekend
- 4 Mandryk: Imperfect residential school reparation will still be costly
- 5 Canadian found dead in Miami building collapse, three more Canadians missing

THIS WEEK IN FLYERS



Powered by

COMMENTS

Postmedia is committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion and encourage all readers to share their views on our articles. Comments may take up to an hour for moderation before appearing on the site. We ask you to keep your comments relevant and respectful. We have enabled email notifications—you will now receive an email if you receive a reply to your comment, there is an update to a comment thread you follow or if a user you follow comments. Visit our [Community Guidelines](#) for more information and details on how to adjust your [email](#) settings.

NewsBusinessOpinion
SportsArtsLifeDriving
E-Paper

Follow the The Star Phoenix



Advertise With UsDigital Ad RegistrySite MapContactPrivacy - UpdatedTerms of UseCopyright

365 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3L4

© 2021 The Star Phoenix, a division of Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication strictly prohibited.